

THEEVADHARA

JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

ENCOUNTER OF RELIGIONS IN FACE OF SUFFERING HUMANITY

HUMAN SUFFERING AND WORLD RELIGIONS

John B. Chethimattam

SOME ASPECTS OF SUFFERING AND SORROW IN THE VEDAS

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BULLETIN: CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO THE CALL OF

HUMAN SUFFERING FROM BANGLADESH

T. M. Manickam

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The Meeting of Religions

Encounter of Religions in the face of
Suffering Humanity

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Editorial

Only a few months have elapsed since the bloody birth of Bangla Desh, for which millions gave their lives. In it the major religions of the world faced a tremendous challenge. They were called upon to witness the indescribable suffering of great masses of people, expelled from their homes, exposed to starvation, and sometimes even mercilessly killed. World religions were called upon to serve these poorest of poor people, and render them material help for their bodies and spiritual solace for their agonized minds. They were also forced to take sides in a political struggle in which seventy-five million people sought to snatch their independence from the clutches of a foreign minority. It is against this background that we have planned this number on the Encounter of World Religions in the face of a suffering humanity.

The encounter is on two fronts. The first one is with regard to the actual suffering of humanity. In the Bulletin section T. M. Manickam reports the first-hand experience of a social worker, Yvon Caron, in the Church's mission of love to the Bangla Desh refugees. An article examines how the different world religions approach the problem of suffering. Continuing this investigation of the contribution of religions in the problem of suffering Raymond Panikkar explores in depth the Vedic idea of suffering, presenting the significant texts having a direct bearing on the problem. Modern science and especially psychology and counselling have a special bearing on human suffering. George Manalel throws some light on the role of counselling in dealing with mental suffering. But there is a second front to the same question: the approach of religions to secular values and to the material side of human life. Space does not permit us to go in

depth into this problem. We have selected two areas of the globe where the involvement of religions in temporal matters is quite evident: Sri Lanka and Japan. Tissa Balasuriya examines the secularisation process in Ceylonese religions, while Ward Biddle studies the spontaneity of approach of the Japanese to nature in its beneficent aspect as well as its baneful, constantly going beyond the visible to the underlying constant.

I hope this composite picture of religions facing suffering humanity will give the Church in India a better realization of her mission in the world today.

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John B. Chethimattam

Human Suffering and World Religions

Introduction

Suffering is one of the basic facts of human existence. Sri Gautama Buddha listed, as the first of his four noble truths, *duhkha*, or the all embracing fact of suffering and sorrow. It has been one of the insoluble problems for religion, and a scandal for men of every age who expected clear-cut solutions for all problems from religion. Sigmund Freud has formulated this scandal in a classical fashion: "The destinies of man are incompatible with a universal principle of benevolence or with - what is to some degree contradictory - a universal principle of justice. Earthquakes, floods and fires do not differentiate between the good and devout men, and the sinner and unbeliever it is by no means the rule that virtue is rewarded and wickedness punished but it happens often enough that the violent, the crafty and the un-principled seize the desirable goods of the earth for themselves, while the pious go empty away".¹ But religions themselves have approached this problem from different angles. I shall not discuss here the Chinese religious tradition which is basically humanism with an optimistic outlook on life, and the dualistic traditions like Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism which ascribe all evil and suffering to an ultimate principle of evil distinct from the Supreme God of all good. Western religions in general take a legal and personalistic approach to human suffering while the Eastern religions adopt an interioristic view of it in the depth of human consciousness. But all recognize the seriousness of the problem and the fundamental mystery involved in it.

1. *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*. 1633 P. 229.

Buddhism is often accused of having a pessimistic outlook on life. The most fundamental truth of Buddhism is *duhkha*, or suffering. Sri Buddha in his Benares sermon says: "The Noble Truth of suffering is this. Birth is suffering; ageing is suffering; sickness is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering; association with the unpleasant is suffering; dissociation from the pleasant is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering—in brief, the five aggregates of attachment are suffering."² *Duhkha* is a more comprehensive term than suffering, implying not only pain, or grief or misery but also impermanence, emptiness and lack of wholeness or perfection. But the specifically Buddhist approach to suffering is that there is no soul or self which exists as a separate essence or entity, or which experiences physical and mental happenings. The sense of being an individual is part of the human condition, which is essentially impermanent. As Nagasena tells Meander in Milindapanna, "It is on account of the various components of my being that I am known by the generally understood term, the practical designation Nagasena." Hence the substance of suffering is an aggregate of factors known as skandhas which result in a visible form and perceivable egotism, produced by the desires, passions and attachments of man, but which is not his abiding reality.

But the positive contribution of Buddhism is that this aggregate of volition, or mental direction, may be used for evil or good, for getting more and more entangled in this world of misery or for realizing liberation through *nirvana*. *Nirvana*, which literally means 'a blowing out' is not a purely negative concept. It is the ceasing of this existence of suffering. But it is also the realization of the authentic condition. A flame when visible is not in its authentic condition; it is burning oil or wood or something like that. Only when blown out does it become a flame by itself. Happiness built upon desire and the possession of things is not authentic. So Dharmapada exhorts: "Let us live happily then, we who possess nothing. Let us dwell feeding on happiness like the shining gods.... Health is the greatest of gifts, contentment is the greatest wealth, trust is the best of

relationships. *Nirvana* is the highest happiness" (XV, 3.8). Bondage and suffering are an intellectual orientation in the wrong direction. What appears a positive quest after things is an entanglement and what appears a pure denial is, in fact, disentanglement (*pratisamkhyānirodha*), absence (*abhava*) of painful things, pure emptiness (*śūnyata*) and the attainment of one's authenticity (*tathata*). Freedom from suffering is not mere escape from life either. The Bodhisattva, or sage, who has attained enlightenment is full of compassion for all men and he wishes to liberate all beings bound in *Samsara*:

“However innumerable sentient beings are,
I vow to save them
However inexhaustible the defilements are,
I vow to extinguish them!”³

He radiates great friendliness and compassion over all these beings and gives attention to all of them⁴. He takes upon himself “the burden of all suffering, with the thought”: “It is surely better that I alone should be in pain than that all these beings should fall into states of woe.”⁵

Hinduism follows the same interiorist approach to suffering as Buddhism, but it has a more constructive view of the state of liberation which is one of freedom from suffering and of final happiness. The Vedas, the most ancient religious literature of Hinduism, have a pragmatic approach to forces of nature that cause suffering. Man is situated between the two absolutes, the absolute existence, the source of all good, and the absolute non-existence, which is the source of all evil, hiding and preventing all good. Between these two extremes man makes use of magic, which is an attempt to get hold of the invisible forces of nature, mythology which is the expectation of a divine intervention in man's favour, and sacrifice and symbolism by which he endeavours to go beyond the limitations of existence to the condition of the gods. The hymns of the Rg and Atharva Vedas are filled with appeals

3. Ed. Conze Buddhist Scripture. P. 183.

4. *Suvarnaprabhakasa* Conze. P. 206.

5. *Sikshasamuccaya*. Trs. Conze. 280f.

to the gods for provision of material goods and removal of suffering and misery⁶. Highest suffering is *Nirṛti*, total inaction, the condition to which Vritra the primeval dragon was reduced by Indra. Later she is personified as "the embodiment of all sins... the one who has dominion over gambling, women, sleep, poverty, disease and all other kinds of trouble....Her sons are death, fear and terror".⁷ In the Puranic period she is identified with Kali the goddess of destruction. Siva, also has similar functions. But at this stage this deity of evil is shown to have a good side also. She is the protector of the weak and helpless, and leads them to their final rest. She is the benign mother that crushes all forces inimical to man.

This rationalizing trend becomes more evident in the Upanishads. Yama, god of Death, is the beneficent god who reveals to Naciketas the mystery of life and reality.⁸ Similarly the Svetasvatara Upanishad presents Rudra, the punishing god, also as the protector, playing on his name Siva: "Rudra, your body which is auspicious, unterrifying, showing no evil—with that most benign body, dweller in the mountains manifest yourself to us.... make auspicious the arrow which you hold in your hand to throw....injure not man or beast".⁹ The major Upanishads, like the Chandogya and Brihadaranyaka, locate the root of the problem of suffering in the duality found in nature, matter and spirit, asuras and devas, though both these opposites come from the same ultimate principle.¹⁰ Hence the solution for suffering is in realizing the ultimate unity of all things in Brahman, the Supreme Reality, which is one alone without a second.¹¹

Western Religious Traditions

Western religions in general deal with pain and suffering from a personalist angle as a punishment meted out to man for

6. Cf. *RV.* VI, 48, 14; X, 99, 10; I, 25, 7-9; VIII, 42, 3: etc.
7. *RV.* VII, 104, 9.
8. *Mahabharata* I, 67, 52.
9. *Katha Upanishad*.
10. *Svet. Up.* III, 5f.
11. *Brih. Up.* I, 3, 1, *Chan. Up.* I, 2, 1.
12. Cf. *Brih.* I, 4, 7.

his sins. Suffering is an anomaly in the life of man who is a seeker after happiness. The Greek religious mythology provided the earliest thoughts on suffering. The ancient Greek communities living in the constant proximity of death, fear of wild beasts, and the inexorable calamities of nature, looked to the gods for protection. But these superior beings were not always beneficial. Sometimes men imagined that they were caught up in their personal rivalries. At other times it appeared as if the gods were concerned primarily with the spiritual purification of men and therefore would not allow them to be materially happy. Hence the Greek predilection for tragedies. Against this background Epicurus developed his ideal of life as balanced pleasure, and the Stoics and Cynics spurned all material wealth and worldly pleasure in order to baffle Fortune and make the soul unafraid, while Plato proposed happiness as the highest goal of life. On the other hand the religious traditions that developed definite attitudes towards suffering were Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Islam Though last in chronological order Islam was closer to nature than the others in the approach to suffering on account of the desert environment in which it was born. In the open desert, exposed to all the inclemencies of weather and all natural calamities, the believer had to acknowledge his inability to understand the secret of suffering. God alone understands it: "To God belongs everything in the heavens and in the earth; he forgives whom he wills, he punishes whom he wills".¹³ Suffering is not only punishment meted out to the violators of God's law, but also the means by which he tests the faithful: "Surely we will test you with something of fear, and of hunger, and of loss of wealth and lives and produce." But those who bear their trials with patience will attain their reward.¹⁴ Sooner or later all will be subjected to this testing.¹⁵ In fact, suffering is a necessary part of the divine guidance of man;¹⁶ for if all distress and misery were removed from the lives of men, "they

13. *Quran*. III, 123.

14. *Quran* II, 150f. Cf. XXI, 86.

15. *Quran* III, 134f, II, 210; XXIX, 1,

16. XI, 12–14.

would surely persist in their error, wandering blindly".¹⁷ Hence the *Quran* suggests that it is foolish to be preoccupied with the inequalities of life, since it is God that distributes suffering or favours to people¹⁸ and "does not burden a soul except according to its capacity."¹⁹ Islam expresses perfect confidence in the loving providence of God: "By the light of day and by the night when it is rest your Lord has not forsaken you, nor is he displeased. Truly what is to come is better for you than what is now, and soon your Lord will bestow gifts on you and you will be pleased."²⁰ God "answers the distressed when he prays to him and removes the evil and appoints you to be inheritors of the earth."²¹ Thus Islam has a positive approach to suffering and looks upon it as an instrument for the achievement of the benevolent purposes of God's mercy.

Judaism established, long before Islam, a positive attitude to suffering, and went beyond the instrumental view which the latter emphasised. For Israel the principal problem was the distribution of suffering: why do the just suffer and the wicked go unpunished? Many attempts are made to solve this apparently insoluble problem. The whole book of Job concentrates its attention on this question. Its solution is that suffering is not always the punishment of wicked deeds. Sometimes God sends suffering to test the loyalty of his friends, as in the case of Job himself.²² By using Job's example it also shows that by faithful acceptance suffering can be made redemptive.²³ What stands out in Israel's view of suffering is God's love and paternal concern which appear behind it. Through all the afflictions sent to Israel God endeavours to bring the adulterous nation back into loving union with him.²⁴ Yahweh sends his own beloved servant as a model of suffering to impress on the people their need for

17. XXIII, 77-79.

18. XVI, 73.

19. II, 286.

20. XCIII.

21. XXVII, 62.

22. *Job* 1, 6-12.

23. *Job* 42, 10.

24. *Hosea* 2, 1-19.

redemption and pardon.²⁵ The later rabbinical writings emphasize the value of suffering borne patiently as an expression of love towards God. We find in them stories of people who suffered persecutions with joy because in them they discovered a way to practise actually the complete love of God which they professed daily in the prayer called *Shema*. Thus Judaism raised misery and suffering to the level of love: not by a blind optimism but by a realistic examination of its meaning and function in human life in the light of God's covenant with humanity.

Christianity's contribution to the problem of suffering was the integration of it into the context of the mystery of the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. When the word of God was made flesh and dwelt in the midst of men²⁶ the sufferings of human flesh received a divine character. Christ did not deny the connection between sin and suffering. When a paralytic was brought to him before healing him physically he took care to heal him spiritually by forgiving his sins.²⁷ While condemning sin in the strongest language²⁸ he evinced also the greatest sympathy for those who endured the consequences of sin. He always sympathised with the suffering masses. "When he came ashore, he saw a great crowd; and his heart went out to them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd."²⁹ He proclaimed himself the doctor who came to look for the sick and not for the healthy.³⁰

What emphasizes the positive value of suffering is Christ's own Cross. The mystery of the Incarnation is that God took on human form and identified himself with the human condition, becoming similar to us in everything except sin."³¹ He "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even to death on a Cross."³²

25. *Is.* 53, 4-7.

26. *Jo.* I, 16.

27. *Mk.* 2, 1-12.

28. *Lk.* 17, 26-30; *Mk.* 7, 17-23.

29. *Mk.* 6, 34; *Mtt.* 9, 36.

30. *Mk.* 2, 17; *Mtt.* 9, 13; *Lk.* 5, 32.

31. *Heb.* 4, 15; 2, 17.

32. *Philip.* 2, 7-8.

By this supreme act of love for men Christ transformed suffering, which was the curse of sin, into the noble sacrifice of love. Christ not only accepted the Cross and suffering but also yearningly looked forward to it as the highest point of his life on earth.³³ It was not only the act of Christ's identification with his suffering brethren but also a total submission to the Father. His food was to do the will of the Father on earth.³⁴ He fulfilled that will in hunger and thirst, toil and persecution, till he offered up his soul to the Father in the sacrifice of the Cross.³⁵ On account of Christ's suffering and death, the sufferings of other men also are no longer mere punishment for sin, or a mere trial of loyalty; they fill up what is wanting in the sufferings of Christ for his body which is the Church.³⁶

Conclusion

Thus through the Incarnation of Christ the different approaches to suffering in World religions are brought to a total synthesis. Human suffering is a sort of prison alienating man from his authentic reality, and hiding his true consciousness in God. It is also the consequence and punishment of sin. But Christ's taking on of human flesh has brought together all men in a single Mystical Body. Now the sufferings of men are no longer isolated and anomalous. They are an external immolation signifying the cosmic sacrifice of all humanity united in Christ the head. Hence they signify the internal, conscious self-offering of all humanity to God and bring man to a realization of his communion with God. So suffering and death itself are not a tragedy but the accentuation of our own consciousness. This realization does not in any way weaken our compassion for the suffering and miserable but only deepens our concern for them. They are no longer isolated individuals suffering by and for themselves. Their suffering is part of the Crucifixion of Christ crying out for the redemption of all humanity.

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33. *Lk.* 22, 15.

34. *Jn.* 4, 34.

35. *Lk.* 23, 46.

36. *Col.* 1, 24,

Some Aspects of Suffering and Sorrow in the Vedas*

Only when men shall roll up space
as if it were a simple skin,
only then will there be an end of sorrow
without acknowledging God.

SU. VI, 20¹

This difficult and ambivalent verse which is found at the very end of a late Upaniṣad, and thus at the end of the whole *sruti*, sums up Vedic reflection on the problem of sorrow. The text may be understood as saying either that to roll up the sky like a skin² is a sheer impossibility and similarly, the suppression of sorrow without the realization of God, or that it is indeed possible to overcome the special fallacy, the *mâyâ* character of space, and that it is certainly possible to transcend time and then to succeed in putting an end to sorrow, even without having to postulate the existence of God though not necessarily

* The present article is an extract from the Manuscript of an Anthology of Vedic Texts: *The Vedic Experience*. The texts selected from the R̥g Veda, Atharva Veda, Brahmanas, Upaniṣads and Bhagavad Gītā are introduced, translated into readable English and followed by notes. *Suffering and Sorrow* belongs to the first section of part IV of the Anthology. Only the chapter on *Physical Ailments*, with the hymns from the Atharva Veda is given here. It is followed by a second chapter *Decrease and Old Age*, and a third, *Beyond Sorrow and Suffering*, both containing a selection from the Upaniṣads.

1. Ākāśa: space; duḥkhasyānta: the end of sorrow; devam avijñāya: without acknowledging God, without discriminating Siva.

2. Or, as some translators have rendered it: "to wrap yourself with the sky as with a skin".

denying him. In the former case we have one very definite axiom which is more in keeping with the rest of the particular Upaniṣad, while in the latter we have a different and uncompromising attitude which assumes that it is possible, without any hypothesis about God, to overcome the human condition and thus reach the desired goal of eliminating sorrow. In the one case we have the theological reduction (with God as the clue) and in the other the cosmological one (cosmic reality offering the key). In the one case God - a real God and not an idol that can be manipulated by human hands, mind or heart - is the ultimate refuge and the solution to the human riddle. God is the end of suffering and man's deliverer from distress. In the other case the cosmo-anthropological picture is that of a reality with two faces as it were: an outer-visible face, which is that of time-space, body-matter, and, obviously, sorrow and suffering, and an inner-invisible face for which we do not possess any category, though consciousness would be the favourite philosophical term, and Brahman the religious one. This Brahman is utterly real and is not an idealistic background or an extrapolation of any human mental or spiritual structure; Brahman, or pure consciousness, is here total bliss and realization.

We touch here one of the central problems of man's experience, the mystery of human sorrow, of which, indeed, we find in the Vedas the seeds of more than one attempt at explanation. These attempts are made in depth and not on a merely sociological plane in which the pair of opposites, pessimism-optimism, might be appropriately employed. To speak about Vedic pessimism or optimism does not in any case make sense, for the two concepts are mutually related, one's comprehension of them varying according to the 'mean' one adopts for measuring what is exaggerated in one direction or another. The charge of pessimism, however, has been so often levelled against Indian spirituality as a whole, that one wonders if the Vedas were at all taken into account! There are, it is true, two clearly distinct periods in the Vedic revelation, the Vedic and the Upaniṣadic and they seem to take two contrasting and extreme positions. One minimises sorrow to such an extent that one finds it difficult to select pertinent texts at all, while the other radicalizes the nature of sorrow to such a degree that the only resort is total escape into another form of existence.

One common trait, however, connects these two conceptions of the sorrowful, namely, both are considered to be an awakening to the transcendent. Suffering brings man to the point of 'rupturing' his humanness and thus to the threshold of transcendence. Man experiences his own suffering as something foreign to him, something outside himself, as if it came from the unknown, from another world, so to speak. This suffering is either the scorpion-sting of some evil power or the very means through which we discover our true nature beyond all the entanglements of the human condition. The first myth belongs to the Vedic period, while the second is typically Upaniṣadic and Vedantic, though in fact a too clear-cut distinction would be wrong. In one one case sorrow is that which disturbs the physical as well as the psychical harmony: it is abnormal and external and thus can be overcome if the causes are properly known and the appropriate remedies applied. In the second case sorrow is the very factor which enables man to rupture the bonds of his human predicament; it is normal and intrinsic and thus it can be transcended only if the human situation is properly understood and the discipline leading to such a realization seriously undertaken.

One type of reflection is conspicuously absent from the whole of the Vedic revelation, namely, the question, later on so agonizing, of *why?* The fact of suffering, the reality of human distress, is taken as given, as a real datum, as something which has to be dealt with, either by regaining the lost poise and happiness, or by transcending totally the sorrowful human predicament. Vedic speculation, however, does not take the path of inquiring about a '*why*.' This would be considered a wrong question.

It is certainly true that the speculation of a later date quotes scriptural texts to support different philosophical doctrines. The *sruti* itself, however, does not seem concerned with explaining the essence of sorrow but only with explaining away its existence. Once again we discover how existential in character is the Vedic revelation, in common with so many other primordial documents of mankind. They present the case, but do not elaborate on it. Furthermore the question of the '*why*' seems to

be thematically avoided, as if speculation concerning it would result in an utterly false perspective. To ask ultimately about the nature of evil implies two very grave assumptions: a) that there is something or somebody responsible for it, and b) that evil belongs to the realm of intelligibility. The Vedas reject both of these assumptions.

a) If sorrow, evil, distress and the like have an independent ultimate cause we cannot avoid dualism and with it the conception that Being is not only good but also evil, for positive and ultimate evil is thereby postulated, a principle of evil irreducible to the principle of goodness. It amounts, in the final analysis, to a tragic conception of reality, because life, survival, goodness and beauty, are possible only by dint of subduing and for ever repressing the other half of reality. Even without defining the ultimate consequences of this attitude, to presuppose that evil has an independent and substantial 'why' enables us to transfer to this moral or ontological scapegoat all the evil which we decline to acknowledge in ourselves. It implies that we simply repudiate the problem and heap on another that which we eliminate from ourselves. In modern terms we could apply ecological categories: the purification of a part of the environment by polluting another. It would be intriguing to examine more closely the dualistic origins of all anti-ecological mentalities, but the mere mention of them may suffice to our present purpose. It is a distinctive feature of the Vedas that the responsibility for the existence of human suffering is not transferred to a prince of Darkness, to a devil in one form or another, but that evil is rather taken to originate from an ill functioning of the given structures of reality owing to a clash or conflict of interests, each of them being good in itself (but not in relation to the whole). Evil is situational, we may say, and not ontological.

b) Evil, suffering and sorrow, have no 'why' because if we could really know the 'why' -- and not only the 'how' -- of them we would explain them away. They are precisely negative 'values' because we cannot give any 'why', any rational explanation. The dark side of reality, the nocturnal aspect of man, is precisely such because light, or the diurnal aspect, has not reached it. If it did, evil, suffering and sorrow would automatically cease to be what they are. Is it not a fact of common experience

that evil in all forms denotes a certain situation which is precisely what it is because there is no reason to account for it, no satisfactory explanation, no justification whatsoever? If a 'why' could be given to the nature of suffering and evil the whole problem would be shifted to the nature of that 'why', i.e. we would have to revert to the question of the previous paragraph. Here also tradition has extracted the ultimate and logical consequences of this attitude: the denial of any reality to evil and suffering. The seeds of it are to be observed in many a text of the *Upaniṣads* and the *Gītā*.

Physical Ailments

In the hymns of the *Rg Veda* explicit mention is scarcely made at all of suffering as such. The poets, however, frequently beseech the divinity to grant protection against sundry ills, against enemies and evil spirits, and we find them constantly praying for a long life, happy and prosperous, and for freedom from suffering. Suffering is a human invariant that cannot be easily explained away.

Now, the most immediate experience as regards the origin of suffering is the pain inflicted by wrong functioning of the human organism, which we call illness. Man discovers, further, that illness is generally due to some external agent encroaching on the human body or affecting his whole person. Sometimes the agent is obvious and visible; at other times it is hidden and invisible. Most of the time man infers that the cause of the malady is both visible and invisible, both material and spiritual, and this conjecture is followed by first steps for a praxis against ailments: the visible and invisible causes must be discovered and conjured away.

A considerable number of hymns of the *Atharva Veda* are prayers for the healing of ailments. These hymns are addressed either to the illness personified or to the demons or spirits who are assumed to be at the root of ailments and illnesses. Other hymns, such as AV IV, 17,³ are addressed to a plant that is the

3. Cf. AV V, 4 and 5 for two other examples of prayers addressed to healing plants.

cure for a particular sickness. Others, again, are addressed to Water⁴ or to Fire⁵ which have the power of chasing demons away.

Among the selected text certain verses are addressed to 'Fever' or, more precisely, to Takman, the evil spirit personifying fever. Yet others are addressed to 'worms', reckoned to be the cause of many malaises, or to physical ailments and bodily infirmities in general. The verses just referred to invoke the plant that has the power of freeing men from illnesses.⁶

These various passages show us clearly the mental agony and fear aroused by bodily ailments, and also the hope and longing for deliverance from them both by natural methods, certainly, and also, and above all, through intervention of a divinity under whatever guise, obscure or less obscure, he may be invoked.

The origin of most evils is external indeed, but not always either the nether or the upper world. It can also be man himself, his neighbours and especially his enemies. Many a text tells us that man has to fear not only the unknown forces of evil but the all too well-known power of his foes. Life on earth is not only a struggle against superhuman powers; it is, and often much more so, a real fight against one's fellowmen, not necessarily enemies; sometimes they are only competitors. And so we hear also the prayer of the man fearing "defeat in games of dice and chance".⁷ These texts from the Atharva Veda depict for us a healthy, hardy race of men, struggling against physical suffering and human competitors with both courage and optimism, and refusing to succumb.

A word should be said here regarding so-called magic practices in order to situate them in the overall world-view of Vedic times. To say a prayer before eating is not to invoke magic as such though it could be if one believed that unless

4. Cf. RV X, 9.

5. Cf. RV I, 9f.

6. Cf. AV II, 4; III, 9 for prayers against rheumatism.

7. AV IV, 17, 7.

the prayer were said the food would not perform its biochemical function in the organism. To utter a blessing on a medicinal plant or to pray before using a certain herb is not necessarily a resort to magic, unless one overlooks the intermediary order of things and attributes direct and exclusive efficacy to what is only a concomitant factor. Any medical praxis today, even the most aseptically scientific one, would recognize that a certain confidence in the medical treatment, and in the physician and the medicines, is indispensable to its efficacy.

The texts that follow are all taken from the same source, the Atharva Veda, which has all too often been considered a book of mere incantations and charms. Without indulging now in any Indological or *religiouswissenschaftliche* theory, we need to understand that any ritual seen only from the outside is bound to appear queer, weird and often magical. By saying this we neither deny the existence of magic and magical practices nor enter into a discussion regarding the nature of magic and its connections with religion. We only say that not all that is considered to be magic by alien eyes, i.e., by non-believing approaches, is in fact such.

Vedic man, indeed, had a holistic idea of fever and not a specialized theory of a quickened molecular movement owing to the extra work imposed on the cellular region concerned. He knew that fever is, rather, a symptom with alarming effects, and he wanted to get rid of it, though he was often puzzled by its recurrent character and its tenacity. He prayed and applied medicines, both procedures being aspects of one and the same human act of fighting disease. He believed that the 'medicine' by itself would not work and that mere words would not suffice. Each human act had the theandric nature of a sacrament, to use borrowed terms for germane concepts.

The prayers that follow are more than simple aspirations; they are more than a sense of a crisis or a mere wish; they are actions as well as utterances: they are expressions of the human fight against disease. They are not speculative hymns or theoretical treatises. They are totally involved in the suffering condition. One feels in them that one confronts the suffering man; speaking and acting. Human malady is not a trifling matter,

here there is no room for lofty considerations nor is there a way of escape. Man is totally engaged in his existential struggle for well-being and faces the dire reality of a power which seems to rob him of health and even of life. Yet he is determined to face the menace, to struggle, and in the end to win. He has in his hand a medicinal herb, on his lips a sacred *mantra*, in his heart a burning hope and in his mind an unflinching faith. He is well aware of the complex web of relations which criss-cross the whole of reality and he wants to interfere in order to restore the lost harmony and balance.

(1) Spare Us, O Burning Fever

Takman

AV V, 22.

1. May Fever flee hence,
exorcised by Agni,
exorcised by Soma
and the pressing-Stone,
by Varuna, Sheer Mind,
the altar and the sacrificial grass⁸
and the blazing logs !
May all harmful things scatter.
2. How yellow⁹ the victims
you consume as with fire
and devour with your heat,
O Fever – but now
your power will all vanish !
Betake yourself off
to the regions infernal,
the regions below !
-
4. To the depths I despatch,
though with cautious politeness,¹⁰

8. sacrificial grass: *barhis*, kusa-grass.

9. How yellow: probably a reference to jaundice.

10. cautious politeness: *Namah kṛtvā*, having paid homage.

this Promoter of dysentery!
Let her now return
to the place where she belongs!¹¹

.....

6. ¹² O Fever all grey
with an arsenic tinge,
accompanied by pains
and covered with blotches,
go seek a new victim
to strike with your plague!

.....

10. Now cold, now burning,
you rack with a cough.
Terrible are your features,
O Fever; pray spare us
from the sight of your face!

.....

11. Do not bring in your train
either languor or cough
or rasping of breath.
Return never more
to the place you have quit.
O Fever, we beg you!

.....

13. I adjure you, O Fevers
of every sort,
whether rife in the autumn
or monsoon or summer,
intermittent,¹³ continuous,
shivering or burning,
depart and vanish!

11. the place where she belongs: lit. to the *Mahāvr̄ṣa*, probably a people of north-west India.

12. Various words in this stanza are of double meaning.

13. intermittent: i. e. tertiary fever or that which recurs every two days out of three (e. g. malarial).

(2) **Away, and Come No More!**¹⁴

Krimi
AV II, 31.

4. The worm in the entrails,
the worm in the head,
the worm in the ribs,
we drive forth with this spell.
5. Whether worms in the hills,
whether worms in the woods,
whether worms in the plants or the waters,
whether worms that reside
within cattle or men –
This whole breed of worms I exterminate !

(3) **Sickness Keep Off !**

Yaksmanivârana
AV IX, 8.

1. Head-ache, head-pain, ear-ache, inflammations,¹⁵
all that now afflicts the head
expel we by our prayer.¹⁶
.....
4. Whatever makes man dumb' or blind,
all that now afflicts the head
expel we by our prayer.
.....

14. Both this hymn and the following (AV II, 32) are onslaughts upon all types of worms and parasites.

15. Inflammations: *vilohitah*, an inflammatory disease, perhaps erysipelas. *Lohita* is a particular disease of the eyelids.

16. Expel we by our prayer: *nir-mantrayâmahe*, denominative of *mantra* (prayer) with prefix *nir-*, lit. 'we pray it away', we exorcise.

17. dumb: or perhaps, deaf and dumb.

6. The fever¹⁸ which assails each autumn,
whose fearful aspect makes man tremble,
 expel we by our prayer.

.....

17. The pains that creep along the intestines,
confounding all within the entrails,
let them go forth at the orifice,
 free from disease, harmless.

.....

(4) Deliver Us from All Afflictions

Apāmāga.
AV IV, 17.

1. I take you, Plant, of Cures the Queen,
conqueror of ills. For all our needs
I impart to you¹⁹ energizing force,
 for every man a thousandfold.

.....

5. Evil dreaming, evil living,
demons, monsters, hags and witches –
all of ill-repute, ill-fame –
 these we now destroy.²⁰

6. Death by hunger, death by thirst,
lack of cattle, lack of children –
by your aid, plant that expels,²¹
 we now expel these maladies.

18. fever: *takman*, probably malaria.

The hymn contains no less than 22 stanzas exorcising every kind of disease in a similar manner.

19. I impart to you: I am endowing you with – to emphasize the power of the human spell.

20. destroy: efface, expel, remove, always in the causative form, *vāśayati* (from *vāś-*), cause to disappear.

21. plant that expels: *apāmārga*, a medicinal and commonly considered ‘magical’ plant, the *achyranthes aspera*, still used against stings of scorpions, etc. The name is also a pun: *apa+ā+mārga* (from *mrj*, to cleanse, wipe, expel).

7. Death by thirst, death by hunger,
defeat in games of dice and chance
by your aid, plant that expels,
we now expel these maladies.
8. The plant that expels is sole controller
of all the herbs. By its aid we now expel
all harm that has befallen you.
Depart, free from disease !

Banaras

R. Panikkar

Suffering and the Religious Counsellor

"If it be one who will be weak with the weak, who will weep with the sorrowful, and who understands the discipline of condolence and fellow-feeling, so that when his skill shall be known and his pity felt, you may follow what he shall advise."

ORIGEN (1)

There are a good number of people who believe that western humanity has turned from the priest to the psychiatrist. At the same time there are many psychiatrists who complain that nowadays too many patients go to them with problems which should actually be tackled by a priest or a religious counsellor. Men, often confronted with the problems of the meaning of their life, constantly consult psychiatrists and counsellors. Very often they seek professional help for their physical and emotional troubles. Man lives in three dimensions: the somatic, the mental and the spiritual. The spiritual dimension can never be ignored, for this is what makes us human. To be concerned about the meaning of life and suffering is not a neurosis which is to be treated by a psychiatrist alone. At times it may be the manifestation of a spiritual agony resulting from a confrontation of religious beliefs and the problems of daily life. In this case the proper diagnosis and the necessary assistance can be given only by someone who can see and understand the spiritual aspect of human life. Hence the role of a religious counsellor in helping suffering humanity is emphasized here.

1. Origen. Homil, In Ps. XXXVII, No. 6, Migne, *Patres Graeci*, XII.

The religious counsellor - a mediator

While it is true that a religious counsellor has no mystical solutions, his very designation implies further a dimension to his counselling techniques, concepts and attitude. When a client seeks out a religious counsellor he sees in him, at least implicitly, God's representative who will welcome and guide him and mediate for him. This is because the religious counsellor sees human worth and the dignity of suffering not only from a psychological but from a theological point of view. The latter not only reinforces the former but gives deeper insight into the human person, whose dignity takes on something of the divine, whose freedom and potential for choice are thus respected, whose responsibility for self is primary. Christ's parable on the use of the talents indicates the possibility of a full maturing for each individual. Moreover, the attitude of the counsellor to the individual is highlighted in Christ's approach to, and acceptance of, persons of every stratum of society and his respect for their self-determination and autonomy.

In his role the religious counsellor is in a way "continuing the revelation", God using him to make available His loving concern for men and to help them become aware of their own dignity and worth, to open up the potentialities in each person, while at the same time he feels and understands the conflicts, confusion and frustrations of men in such a way as to make them aware of how God entered fully into human life and helped man towards an enlarged experience of self, which may be summarized as a sense of Hope.

The inadequacy of the traditional arguments

A psychological approach to the problem of suffering becomes much more important when we consider the inadequacy of the traditional arguments. Let us briefly examine three main ones brought forward by theologians and philosophers in defence of human suffering.

I. Physical good is impossible without physical evil. In other words, pleasure is possible only by way of contrast with pain. This argument maintains that God cannot create pleasure without

creating pain. The trouble with this argument is that pleasure and pain are not correlatives.

II. Another theory says that physical evil is God's punishment for sin. But we have to bear in mind that many physical evils are simultaneous with birth (e. g. mental retardation). No sin of the child can explain these physical evils as punishments. Similarly the sufferings of animals cannot be accounted for on these lines.

III. The third argument says that suffering is God's warning to men. This is both psychologically and theologically unsound. Suffering does not necessarily turn people to God, but rather presents the problem of evil in an acute form, and is said to account for more defections from religion than any other cause. The inadequacy of these arguments leaves the existence of suffering in the world as the greatest of all problems which the mind encounters when it reflects on God and His relation to the world. If He is perfectly good and all powerful how has suffering any place in the world? Why does He allow it? Why does He not deliver us from it? Boethius once asked: "If there be a God, from whence proceed so many evils?" For him it was a theological problem since he could not reconcile the omnipotence of God with evil. The problem is not just a theological "puzzle" but one that should touch the soul of every person, theologian, sociologist and psychiatrist. It is not claimed here that only psychology can give an answer to it. On the other hand a psychological approach seems to be of great importance both to the sufferers and to those who deal with them.

The psychological approach

The first thing a religious counsellor should do is to help the suffering person understand the meaning of life and suffering. Psychiatrists have noticed that one of the commonest causes of mental suffering is the feeling of insecurity. The most fertile field for its development is the mind of the sufferer. Religious counselling can help these "psychic sufferers" a lot, for it can give them that firm spiritual support which the healthy person does not need very much but which a psychically insecure person urgently requires to bolster up his insecurity. This applies especially to persons, for example, who have lost a loved one around

whom their life revolved, and who then invariably raise the question whether their own life has any meaning. There is something very pitiable about them. They are probably left without moral reserves. They lack that spiritual fibre which can be supplied only by an affirmative world-view of life. Since they lack spiritual strength they find it difficult to accept the inevitable blows of fate and cannot counter them. In other words they are left morally unarmed. In this sort of crisis a religious counsellor can help them create their own counter measures through a positive attitude towards life.

A recent survey⁽²⁾ shows how an affirmative attitude toward life can help the sufferer both physically and psychologically. A large-scale statistical survey of longevity showed that all the long-lived people had a "serene" view of life. On the other hand melancholics have a relatively short span.

The meaning of life

First of all the suffering person should be made aware of the fact that there aren't any ready-made answers to the problems of life. Even now human existence remains a mystery. Many psychiatrists have found that many of the complaints of their patients arise from a misconception of the meaning of life. The patients assert that the whole meaning of life is pleasure and argue that every human activity is governed by the striving after happiness, that every psychic process is determined by the pleasure principle. They may be influenced by the Freudian theory of the pleasure principle. It will be good to keep in mind that Freud spoke also about a reality principle which is not opposed to the pleasure principle but is its extension. The religious counsellor has to convince this kind of person that pleasure is not the goal of our aspirations, but the consequence of attaining them. As Kant said long ago pleasure does not loom up before us as the goal of an ethical act; rather, an ethical act carries pleasure on its back. Life itself teaches us that "we are not here just to enjoy ourselves." A statistical survey conducted by a Russian experimental

2. Viktor Frankl, M.D. "*The Doctor and the Soul*", Bantam Books, New York, 1965, page 24.

psychologist shows that a normal man in an average day experiences incomparably more unpleasurable sensations than pleasurable ones⁽³⁾.

Values in suffering

Another way in which a religious counsellor can help a suffering person is by conveying to him the values contained in suffering. Very often the suffering person bewails his life which according to him has no meaning since his activities are without any higher values. This is a point on which the religious counsellor has to reason with him, and show that it does not matter at all what a person's occupation is. The most important thing is how he works, whether he in fact fills the place in which he happens to be.

Modern psychologists speak about three different kinds of values in life: the creative, the experiential and the attitudinal. Creative values are achieved through creative actions, e.g. a student achieves knowledge through his studies or a farmer by producing crops. Experiential values are realized through human experiences. A tourist, for example, achieves different experiential values by visiting various places. The attainment of both kinds of value requires an active involvement in them. In the case of suffering people attitudinal values are the most important. It is the task of the religious counsellor to call their attention to the importance of them. For life is meaningful even when it is neither fruitful in creativity nor rich in experience. Attitudinal values lie in a man's attitude toward the limiting factors of his life. His very response to the restraints upon his potentialities provides him with a new realm of values which surely belong among the highest. What is significant in them is the person's attitude toward an unalterable fate. The opportunity to realize such attitudinal values is present whenever a person finds himself confronted by a destiny which he can cope with only by acceptance of it. The way in which he accepts and "bears the cross", and the courage he manifests in suffering, are the measure of his human fulfilment. This means that human life can be fulfilled not only through creation and enjoyment but also through suffering.

If the religious counsellor can convey this meaning of suffering to his patients, he definitely succeeds in alleviating their mental agony.

Hebbel once said: "Life is not anything; it is only the opportunity for something". If this is true every situation offers the opportunity for the realization of values, creative, experiential or attitudinal. In other words even in enduring a kind of doing is implicit. We can rightly call it a "moral achievement". Dr Victor Weizacker once said that the patient, as the sufferer, is superior to the doctor. A doctor who is attending a patient with an incurable disease or a dying person may feel frustrated because he thinks that his professional skill has failed to cure the patient. But the patient becomes a hero who meets his fate and holds his own by accepting it in tranquil suffering.

Development of personality through suffering

It is generally admitted that only through frustration and tribulation can the fullness of creativity and wisdom be realized. Many psychiatrists connect suffering and great misfortunes with fundamental improvements in the person. In a survey conducted by Dr Crutchfield in 1959 four hundred practising psychiatrists agreed with the statement: "I believe that we are made better by the trials and hardships of life." Another leading psychiatrist, Dr Kunkel believes that people learn to face great crises later in life by a process of meeting minor life-crises from early childhood onwards through development. He sees human life as one "unending chain of crises".⁴ Old behaviour patterns are disrupted and discarded for the new patterns required by the crisis. The feelings of creativity and confidence that come from solution of a crisis constitute an important part of the growth of personality. The experience of desperation and helplessness could be the prelude to a patient's critical examination and transformation of his defences. Thus suffering is considered a facilitative force in the growth process. A crisis requires judgements. The process of making judgements that propel the person forward in his mastery of life draws on many elements of personality and demands a

4. Kunkel, F. "*Religion and Human Behaviour*", Association Press New York, 1954, page 150.

high level of functioning. Each life-crisis has rich potentiality for the building of spiritual strength in the personality. It is very important that in counselling the sufferer the religious counsellor should emphasize this aspect. It will enable the patient to see the brighter side of his suffering.

Acceptance

All the psychologists agree that the acceptance of his situation by the patient is the first step towards recovery. He often finds it difficult to accept his condition because he is worried by many uncertainties. He is not sure whether he will be able to manage physically. He is uncertain of how others will receive him. Moreover, he is not certain what kind of person he will be if he recovers. The only solution the religious counsellor can suggest to these problems is total acceptance of them. Does this mean that the *status quo* is to be maintained? Has the sufferer to feel glad about his situation? Acceptance is not resignation to the inevitable. In making him accept his situation the religious counsellor is only concerned with the conditions that facilitate acceptance of suffering as non-devaluing. The disability or suffering may still be seen as inconvenient and limiting. The sufferer, however, can still try to improve the improvable. He may try to walk with the aid of a cane instead of crutches, but he will not abandon his crutches prematurely in order to appear normal. The counsellor can be sure of his client's acceptance of his situation if he.

1. shows faith in his capacity to cope with life.
2. does not deny or distort his feelings and abilities.
3. considers himself a person of worth.
4. does not expect others to reject him.
5. is reasonably free of feelings of inferiority.

The problem of help and sympathy

In dealing with a sufferer the counsellor has to be on his guard against two popular methods of handling his problems, viz. help and sympathy. Help is a good thing: it expresses concern for another, a willingness to put oneself out for his well-being. Yet for a suffering person the value of help should not

be taken for granted, for it connotes a variety of meanings and experiences, some of which are a threat to him. The act of helping may be disturbing to the recipient because it is not simply more or less useful. It is primarily a social relationship that expresses a variety of attitudes on the part of the participants. It becomes a one-sided social relationship that easily leads to social status judgments. The patient may feel inferior. He is liable to think that he is considered more helpless than he actually is. This often leads him to depressive spells. Sometimes the act of helping is resented because it relates to the patient's disability. Underlying this unwillingness to be noticed is the fear of being devalued as a disabled man. A study conducted by some American psychiatrists showed that about 70% of the patients wanted help to be restricted to major cases only.⁵ Thus the helper will be better prepared to meet the situation adequately if he keeps in mind that a suffering person may want help only on major occasions of necessity.

In the same way, sympathy, that basically human expression of warm concern for another, does not always afford consolation. It may be taken for pity which produces the feeling of being devalued and of not being worth much. This can cause additional suffering to the patients. Let us, for example, examine two very common expressions of sympathy: "I'm sorry it happened", "I'm sorry for you". Underlying these outward expressions of sympathy is the implicit pleasure that "I'm happy it did not happen to me" Or "I'm not like him". Moreover, in many of our expressions of sympathy we fail to understand the feelings of the sufferer. We often hear such expressions as "Just don't worry; it is not serious; after all I had the same trouble when I was young". This kind of sympathy is easily rejected because the patient thinks that nobody really understands his problems. It is good to keep in mind the saying "No headache is so terrible as mine".

Empathy

Instead of sympathy and help modern psychologists speak about 'empathy' towards the sufferer. This concept is defined as an attempt by the counsellor to perceive the patient and his phenomenological world as he sees it. It means the attempt to think and

5. *Help Study*. Ladieun, Hansman, Dembo, 1947.

feel *with* rather than *for* or *about* the patient. Carl Rogers cites an example of the counsellor's thoughts as he assumes this role:

"To be of assistance to you I will put aside myself - the self of the ordinary interaction - and enter into your world of perception as completely as I am able. I will become, in a sense, another self for you, an *alter ego* of your own attitudes and feelings - a safe opportunity for you to discern yourself more clearly, to experience yourself more truly and deeply, to choose more significantly".⁶

In an empathetic relationship, the feeling and perceptions of the counsellor and the patient are not and cannot be identical because the content of their distress is different. The patient is distressed because of the loss of his health, whereas the counsellor feels sorry because his client is distressed. So also their moods need not be similar. If the patient is depressed the counsellor need not also become depressed. Instead of identity what is required is a congruence of feeling and understanding between the patient and the counsellor. Congruence, rather than identity, moreover, seems to have a better potential for diminishing distress. Not only do different points of view introduce new angles, but the counsellor can remain free of the anxiety of the person in distress whose emotions act as barriers to a realistic evaluation of the situation. An empathetic attitude makes the patient feel unconditionally understood, loved and respected. He feels the acceptance of the counsellor and this acceptance encourages him to be more accepting of himself. This intuitive empathetic attitude allows the sufferer to open himself up, and move towards a "personal self-objectification", a loosening of the defensive mechanisms which are employed to cover up conflicts. Acceptance of the patient is non-judgemental of the values held by the patient, that is, it does not imply approval or disapproval of what the client says or feels - it means respecting the right of the patient to think differently from the counsellor, no matter how unfair, or absurd, negative or pleasant. All the same the counsellor is not neutral towards the client - he has a positive regard for him, even though he may not agree with him, and this makes acceptance

6. Carl Rogers "Client Centered Therapy", Haughton, 1951, page 35.

more than 'tolerance' which is actually a "putting up with" the patient's feelings and attitudes. Positive acceptance of the patient also avoids the danger of sympathy which minimizes the patient's feelings and encourages dependency. This way the counsellor learns not only what the patient thinks and feels, but also how he comes to do so and how he experiences this feeling. If the religious counsellor can establish an empathetic relationship of this kind with his patient, he undoubtedly overcomes one of the greatest obstacles in dealing with the sufferer.

Use of the Group - Dynamics

Group methods are growing in popularity not only in helping the sick, but also as means of assisting the already functional person to achieve greater self-awareness, which in turn can lead to increased effectiveness, greater humanness, and further actualization of his potentials. Present trends indicate that group-approaches may largely supplant individual counselling because of their effectiveness in leading to change of behaviour. By coming together and discussing their common problems the patients will be able to learn how each one feels about his problems and reacts to them. Moreover they will be able to see that their problems are not unique, as they think, but common to many people.

Conclusion

Hippocrates once said that a physician who is also a philosopher is like unto the gods. This can very well be applied to religious counsellors too. For it is when a person suffers that he often questions the values of his life. In this crisis he may doubt the worth of his life, he may find it hard to believe in the providence of God. He might also become uncertain about his future. These moral and psychological anxieties will surely add to his physical suffering. In this situation, perhaps, the only person who can adequately tackle his problems would be a religious counsellor who to a certain extent, becomes a 'priest' "with the beneficial, loving radiancy reaching out of one human consciousness for the welfare of another."⁷

New York

George Manalel

7. Thomas Hora, "*In Quest of Wholeness*", page 101.

The Phenomenon of Secularization in Ceylon

Secularization is a name given to the social process of desacralization whereby areas of life are freed from religious domination and acquire an autonomy of their own. In *Religion in Secular Society*, London, 1966 XIV, Bryan Wilson speaks of secularization as "The process whereby religious thinking, practice and institutions leave their social significance".

Secularization has to be understood historically as a process of evolution from a type of society in which religion played a major role so much so that the whole society had a sacred or sacral character. This was so in ancient Ceylon as in medieval Europe. In that phase of our history religion was government, education, arts, business, and even war and peace were related to religion. Domination by religion meant to a great extent domination of the clergy and the religious hierarchy over many spheres of society. In recent centuries more and more areas of life have been, as it were, liberated from the control of religion. This has been a gradual process which more recently has become much faster and more general.

The understanding of secularization also depends on the understanding of religion; for secularization is seen as an alienation from some form of religion. Religion has in fact been related more or less intimately to many factors:

- a) to magic, charms and popular superstitious practices.
- b) to worship, meetings in religious institutions and around religious 'persons' – institutional religion, ritual.
- c) to transcendental other-worldly values with or without belief in a personal God.

Secularization as a freeing from religion may be understood in different senses:-

- 1) As a liberation from popular superstitious practices, magic, charms and a fear of nature.

- 2) As an alienation from religious practices, rituals such as worship, attendance at Churches etc. and from participation in activities of institutional religions.
- 3) As the de-consecration of a person or institution. e.g. a building used for a church may be converted into a museum or library. This may still be with a religious orientation, though the use may be considered secular.
- 4) Absence of a reference to a transcendental being or transcendental values. This may be indifferent to religion.
- 5) In politics as an attitude of neutrality to religions.
- 6) Secularism, positive denial of a belief in a transcendental being or transcendental values. This means the acceptance of only this-worldly reality as a fundamental philosophical attitude and consequently a denial of any other-worldly values and of a God. Hence it is opposed as an alternative to religion which believes in other-worldly values.
- 7) A positive affirmation of the value of the world for its own sake.
- 8) Today there is talk of a "secular theology" - or of the secularization of theology. Theology is developed with an accent on the presence of divine and spiritual values in the world, as a secular reality. In this sense healthy secularity and religiousness coincide.

Secularization may be understood *negatively*, as a process of desacralization, or a liberation from the control of the religious sphere; *positively*, as an affirmation of the values of the world. A positive insistence on the autonomy and dignity of the secular, the human, the scientific and the material aspects of the universe. In the above classification the last two senses refer more to the positive understanding of secularization. These two aspects, the negative and the positive, can also be different phases of the problem of secularization. Certain religions may reveal one aspect more than the other, at a given time.

The problem of semantics.

In our discussions we should carefully distinguish these meanings and be clear as to what we refer to by the term secularization. A good deal of the debate on secularization may

be of a semantic nature. The attitude of religion to secularization could also depend on the understanding of secularization and for this the understanding of the term is very significant.

The measure of the extent of secularization also depends on an understanding of it. If secularization is understood in the sense of alienation from practices of institutional religion then it can be measured rather objectively in terms of statistics of religious appurtenance and frequentation of places of worship even though this too is not a conclusive criterion. If secularization is understood as an alienation of the person from God then this cannot easily be measured or quantified because it is a matter of an intimate state of thought and being within a person.

The understanding of the nature, extent, causes and impact of secularization depends very much on our understanding of the term and reality of religion. Since these uses of the word secularization are so diverse we cannot speak of its causes and extent etc. all under rubric.

We may say that in general there is a trend in the modern world towards a greater secularization, i.e. religious and other-worldly considerations seem to have less of an impact now on men's thought and actions. In general it is also true that the trend towards secularization is also in practice connected with a greater spirit of secularism i.e., acting as if there were nothing beyond this world. The process of becoming independent of religion is also leading to a greater neglect of the practices of institutionalized religion in the temple, kovil, mosque and church. It may also be asserted that the neglect of the practices of institutionalized religion may in effect be a reduction of the impact of the transcendental other-worldly values on men's lives (though this may be questioned by "secular" theologians). In this connection it may be said that the neglect of transcendental values is in fact an estrangement of persons from God.

Correlations of these types are very difficult to establish and there is little evidence even statistically concerning religious observances in Ceylon. We can only make rough generalizations about external practices and assumptions about internal attitudes

in the course of discussion and these would be subject to correction.

For the sake of clarity we may consider the extent and causes of secularization under different meanings or significances given to the term.

1) *As a liberation from popular, mythical or superstitious practices*, secularization is taking place rapidly in Ceylon. It is caused by the expansion of education, in both the sciences and the humanities by the growth of the means of communication and the increasing control of man over nature. It is true that in the rural areas there is still a belief in (or fear of) natural forces, in fate, destiny, good and bad times and periods, in the influence of charms, curses etc. Yet this is steadily decreasing. All the same the increasing stress of our times is causing many to have recourse to such practices – though the areas of such belief are decreasing with the advance of knowledge. For the sake of brevity a litany of such beliefs and fears which still affect a good portion of the life of our people is not set forth here.

Even those who are more educated and scientific-minded have a hangover of such sentiments. Thus in building houses certain rituals are observed to appease spirits. Certain numbers, certain sizes, are avoided. In very many, even of those who do not believe in charms, amulets etc. there is an attitude that they might as well use them to be doubly sure, and make the best of both worlds. A fair amount of the conversation in rural areas is concerned with auspicious times, places, persons. Medicine is connected with *mantras*. They may not be altogether absent even from sophisticated western medicine including psychiatry.

Another aspect of secularization in this sense is the problem of how much truth there is in the claims of approaches like those of astrology. How far are our lives determined by the stars and the moon? Recourse to astrology and to horoscopes is fairly widespread in Ceylon. Issues such as a propitious time of marriage and even the choice of marriage-partners are decided with reference to such phenomena.

Briefly we may say that the younger generation is more secularized in this sense than the elder generation; so is the city-dweller compared to the villager, the more educated to the less educated, and most probably men to women. Men of religion too are differently related to these practices. The different religions too may view them differently.

2) *Secularization as an alienation from practices of religion* is a phenomenon that can be studied statistically in terms of external behaviour. But not much data is available in Ceylon, though a decrease in the frequentation of religious practices is generally discernible in the country.

The socio-religious survey conducted by Prof. Francois Houtart of the University of Louvain in 1969 gives an idea of Sunday Mass attendance in Ceylon. An average of 45% of women and 35% of men attend Sunday Mass. Girls constitute the category with the highest Mass attendance (50.1%). The national rate for boys is 39.3%. The attendance is better where there are concentrations of Catholics as in the cities, and rather poor in the estates and colonization schemes. The survey hints that there is "a certain break in the behaviour of male adolescents with regard to the religious family patterns. It is a new phenomenon which tempts us to relate it to the incidence of unemployment" - Quest 43 p. 9 (April, '71). We do not however have earlier data to be able to evaluate the trends in the attendance of Catholics at Mass in Ceylon.

A fundamental cause of alienation from the practice of religion is the break-up of traditional society in which going to the temple, the kovil, the mosque and to church was a part of the set patterns of life. Religious observances were an expression of one's belonging to a particular socio-cultural group. The social pressure of the family and the group saw to it that persons frequented the places of worship and belonged to religious associations.

Rapid social change, technological advance, urbanization, education, mass media - all these have combined to break up the even tenor of life in the towns and even in the villages of the country. People have many more interests and alternative ways of

using their leisure than in a more static society. Religion which had been attuned to a moral, stable community has not yet found ways of meaningfully relating to the new modernized urban and semi-urban groupings.

Among some younger people, the intelligentia and the workers, there is also a certain lack of belief in the institutional forms of religion. They do not necessarily equate going to the temple or to church with fundamental loyalty to the ultimate values of a religious belief particularly justice, equality and love. The modern predilection for self-examination and reappraisal is partly responsible for this form of secularism. Further it is claimed that there is not much to choose between believers who go to religious services and others who do not. So why bother to go at all? Some accuse worshippers of a certain degree of hypocrisy for not practising what they profess.

The status of the man of religion

Another consideration is the social position of the "religious person", the priest, monk or nun in society. People take their decisions in life with less reference to them. The nationalization of the schools helped to reduce their impact on the education of children. At least it is no longer provided for by the management of the structures of education. The reduction of the areas of the fear of the unknown, owing to the advance of knowledge, has also made for the decreased need of recourse to the spiritual leader. The psychiatrist tends to replace the exorcist, the government-appointed teacher, the religious educator. Whereas in earlier times the man of religion was often the sole leader available in an area as is still the case in some villages, today there are many competing for the attention and interest of people: the politician, the trade unionist, the newspaper, film star, musician and novelist, the agricultural extension officer and the social worker.

The decrease in the number of monks and priests

The establishment of the Universities, especially of Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara, has had a profound impact on the thinking of the Buddhist Bhiksu. These Universities afforded the Buddhist

monks an opportunity for higher education in subjects which they generally studied in the temples. They had also an opportunity of obtaining degrees which were recognized for the purposes of employment.

While in the one hand there was a greater opportunity of a more rational education in Buddhism, these also gave the Bhiksu a chance of obtaining secure employment with a monthly salary. For quite a few this has been an invitation to leave the Sangha. It is said that quite a few thousand younger Buddhist Monks have become laicized during the past decade, particularly on account of the universities and of the prospect of a teaching post in government service.

There is also a decrease in the number of those who choose the monastic profession. A similar phenomenon is noticeable among the Christian clergy and religious.

Among monks, priests, mothers and sisters there is an ongoing discussion about adaptation of their consecrated life to the needs of our times and the ways of secular life. This too is an aspect of the impact of secularization on religion. They do not so easily accept the traditional interpretations of the sacred scriptures.

3) Secularization as an absence of reference to transcendental values or to God. This is an attitude in which questions are studied, and problems are decided without reference to God or to transcendental religious values of an other-worldly nature. This is a common attitude in modern times. The basic attitude of philosophical Hinayana. Buddhism may be understood as an abstraction from the question of the existence of a God.

It is a normal procedure in scientific disciplines to try to explain as much of reality as possible with data from the world. It has been a means by which knowledge has grown. There is a tendency for education too to take place in this manner specially at the university level. This could also be an amoral approach that stresses only the intellectual aspect of education.

Abstraction from trancendental values is possible with an affirmation of certain ultimate values of the present world. Some

emphasize the absolute primacy of such values as authenticity, sincerity, freedom, justice, love and peace, as the core of religion.

Whether the growth of an attitude in which there is no explicit reference to other-worldly values or to God is a phenomenon of alienation from religion or the sacred depends once again on an understanding of religion and the sacred. If religion is only other-worldly, i. e. a relation to values or a person outside and beyond this world, the attitude is not religious. If religion is also concerned with the relations among persons in this world, if the core and substance of religion is *maitriya*, love and good actions, an abstraction from other-worldly values need not necessarily be irreligious; it need not be considered secularization in the sense of being an alienation from religion. It may even be a stage of liberation for the practice of true religion.

This shows how much depends on our understanding of the terms 'religion' and 'secularization'. There are some who maintain that the whole of reality is sacred, that there is nothing that is purely sacred or purely secular. The sacred is understood as a depth relationship of other-centeredness within the secular realities in which we are embedded. This, in a sense, is a basic inspiration of Hinduism which regards all reality as in God. Hinduism has inspired modern theology in Europe and America to come to such conclusions as are met with in Tillich and Bonhoeffer and subsequently in John Robinson's *Honest to God*.

In contemporary Christian theological thought there is sometimes reference to a theology of the death of God. What is meant generally is that the idea of a God "out there" up in the heavens or rigidly controlling human behaviour, or available to man as a 'good father' figure, is no longer acceptable to many and in more sophisticated societies. God is to be seen, it is said, primarily within this world in the unselfishness of the relationship of persons.

Religion itself, in some forms, can have a secularizing impact. Religion that is purified and purifying can help in the reduction of myth, superstition and the fears of man. Thus in the West the acceptance of the unique God of the Bible meant a liberation from the whole pantheon of the ancient world. Hin-

duism in so far as it insists on the uniqueness of an all-embracing deity, Budhism in its sophisticated humanism, Islam in its monotheism can be and have been agencies of demythologizing popular beliefs that earlier passed for religion. In that sense these religions have had a secularizing effect throughout their history.

The existence of many religions has a similar impact to the extent that religion claims to be absolute in all its dimensions. The growth of secularity can be a by-product of religious plurality. Religious antagonisms can help secularization in that people get disgusted with religious conflicts and prefer to be neutral, if not indifferent, to religion.

4) *Secularization as an explicit denial of the transcendental value of God.* Considering the attitude of Buddhism to the existence of a divinity, we may say that secularization in this sense is not wide-spread in Ceylon. Few people deny a relationship to spiritual or other-worldly values of an after-life. Even those most modernized or most liberated from magic and charms or alienated from institutional religion do not usually deny the existence of an after-life and cherish hope or fear of it. Very few in practice deny the existence of some supreme power, deity or being.

In this sense the Ceylonese are still quite religious and this form of secularization is limited to a few among the rationalist intelligentsia. Even those who belong to Marxist political parties, continue in their religious sentiments if not affiliations. This religiousness is of course much deeper than that of others who merely perform pooja on religious occasions for political purposes.

Practical materialism may be widespread as a way of life; but this is so in the context of a belief in some supernatural power or in the operation of a cosmic karma beyond our personal lives. Man is not all one piece. He is not a neat ideologically defined category. We find in practical life a continuing juxtaposition of many viewpoints and attitudes which may be theoretically contradictory.

Secularization and modernization

There is a tendency to identify secularization with modernization and modernization with westernization. There is a correlation among these phenomena, but what it is would depend on an understanding of the terms. Secularization in the sense of liberation from the fear of nature, magic, charms etc. is closely related to modernization. Secularization in the sense of a denial of transcendental values may or may not be related to modernization; for some modernized persons and groups may be more deeply other-worldly and religious than some of the traditional animists or worshippers of nature. The same holds good for westernization.

It is noteworthy that historically Western scholars have contributed significantly to the understanding of the Eastern religions. Hinduism and Buddhism have benefited much from the research of European and American scholars and universities.

A more interesting phenomenon is that of the youth counter-culture in the West, particularly in the United States. The younger generation contests traditional religion in its more formalist approaches of external religiosity. It contests the morality of the religious traditions in regard to both inter-personal and social relations. On the other hand the youth counter-culture in its more serious aspects is deeply committed to profound human values such as freedom, social justice and international peace. Accordingly it has been keenly interested in inter-racial justice in the U.S.A. and in peace in Vietnam. For such causes youth have suffered much at the hands of the socio-political establishment.

Secularization and Socialization.

Another interesting correlation to be thought out is that of secularization and socialization. In so far as socialism may be materialistic and atheistic it is secularizing in almost every sense of the word. Here the influence of Marxist socialism has been considerable during the past forty years.

On the other hand in so far as socialism is communitarian and egalitarian it can make people more other-centered and less

selfish. If religion is conceived as charity and other-centeredness, the spread of socialistic mentalities and structures can help build a more religious spirit among the people of a country. If religion is understood solely as other-world-centred, without reference to this world, as is the case with some persons, socialism would be opposed to such a religious motivation, and would have a secularizing impact.

It is interesting to note that the new draft Constitution for Sri Lanka sets out as a principle of State Policy the objective of socialism as well as that of providing conditions for the practice of the basic principles of all religions.

Secularization and Political life

In the field of politics, we have the modern phenomenon called the "secular state". This concept has taken its own line of development in India because of Jawaharlal Nehru. The U.S. spirit of separation of Church and State tended to make the state ignore religion.

In India the state is open to all religions and shows no special preference for any religion, nor is state policy determined by religious considerations. In Ceylon the modern state has so far been theoretically neutral to religion since Independence. The Constitution provides for non-discrimination against any religion (Sec. 29.)

In the new Constitution, which is being drafted at present Buddhism is to have a special place in the state of Sri Lanka and the state undertakes to protect and foster Buddhism without prejudice to the rights of other religions. It is an interesting phenomenon that there is hardly any opposition to this measure which is sponsored by a coalition government including Marxist Ministers and a Marxist Minister for Constitutional Affairs. This is an indication of the extent to which problems of religion are not burning issues in Ceylon today. It also means that there is a fair measure of tolerance in the religion of the majority and in the minorities towards them. That religion is not a serious dividing force in Ceylonese society is an indication of a degree of secularization there. Strangely enough the very act by which

Ceylon becomes once again a state where Buddhism has special place is both the negation of secularity and the exercise of a type of it revealed in the manner in which it is taking shape.

Secularization and the revival of Buddhism with state patronage go hand in hand in Ceylon. On the one hand there is a regular expression of the importance and role of religion, specially Buddhism, in our country; on the other there is a growing rationalization of public policy. While religion is given an honorific place at public gatherings and on ceremonial occasions, the influence that men of religion had in different sectors is being reduced in both the village and the city. This is so in education, in the social services, in politics and in general decision-making in matters both public and private. We do not use the term "secular society" as India or Bangla Desh does because the problem of several religions is being solved differently here. Our policy is something like "Buddhism mainly but other religions also" maintaining a due proportion as far as public policy is concerned.

The rapprochement among the religions in Ceylon has helped this amalgam of state patronage of religion on the one hand and growing secularization on the other. The animosities among religions have decreased and almost completely disappeared during the past five years or so. Hence there was no major public disagreement when policies such as the change of the weekly holiday from Sunday to the 'Poya Day' was carried out in January 1966 and revised in August 1971. Ten years ago these would have created a big political rumpus and much heart-burning among different religious groups.

The 'Poya Day' holiday episode is perhaps an indication that the country is coming to a point where it does not believe that religion can be fundamentally helped or harmed by public patronage or opposition, or at least that the revival of religion is not a matter of establishing a religious state. The reaction of the Christians with regard to the change from Sunday to Poya Day and back to Sunday is also significant. In 1966 there was very little opposition to the "loss" of Sunday and in 1971 no great enthusiasm about the return of the holiday to Sunday.

Christians learnt to adjust themselves to having their Sunday worship on working Sundays. It may even be asked whether in certain areas some Christians do not prefer to have the weekly worship on a working day in order to be completely free on the holiday.

In Ceylon we have moved towards a new attitude among the religions and this can help build much smoother relations in public life among the different religions. The State can thus partly foster religions and also be secular in other matters without much trouble from religious groups or sentiments. We are happily witnessing a decrease of religious fanaticism, bigotry and communalism that tended to set one religious group against another. The present form of secularity is a help to peaceful co-existence of the different religions.

Secularization of Religion

An interesting phenomenon in contemporary Ceylon is the trend of understanding religion in a secular sense. Some men of religion themselves see the role of religion as related more to the "secular" sphere than to an area of life considered sacral. In this sense secularization is not a movement away from religion but from an aspect of religion.

The secular approach within religion seeks to appreciate the importance of 'this worldly' human relations for the spiritual fulfilment of persons and groups. The spiritual and the divine are placed in the heart of day-to-day affairs. In that sense the secular is sacred.

The Hindu philosophical approach of the all-pervading nature of the Divine in the universe helps to give a sacred value to all reality. The unity of Atman-Brahman can be the fount of a universal secularity or universal sacredness.

Buddhism had such an impact in that it does not pay attention to a transcendent God and sees spiritual growth in *maitriya, karunawa*, in right actions and just relations. Within Buddhism there is a trend towards a further rationalization away

from popular religion that is often mingled with elements of a more pietistic religiosity or even selfish political manoeuvering.

In Christianity secular theology is having an impact on religion, specially among the full-timers of the religious establishment. In Catholicism this is becoming fairly pronounced among the younger priests, religious and laity. Thus among the priests there is a greater appreciation of the value of secular involvement, and a certain scepticism about the traditional practice of religiosity. Some among the younger clergy even find their ministry - as understood traditionally - inadequate and less meaningful. This type of situation is leading to clashes within the Church itself. The recent public debate regarding the celibacy of the clergy was one such instance. It leads to disagreements concerning the formation of future priests. The issue concerning the take-over of the national seminary in Ampitiya by the conference of Bishops also centers round different approaches to priestly formation, including the question whether to be more open to the secular or not. In the coming years this phenomenon is likely to be more widespread. It is influencing the nuns and brothers as well as laygroups.

Philosophical Religion and Popular Religion.

Our discussion of secularization and religion will also depend on whether we understand religion in its deep philosophical perspective on life or in its popular expression among the vast majority of our people.

Intellectuals tend to speak of the religions in terms of philosophical tenets. In this sense its relationship to the phenomena of secularization is not difficult to see. Philosophical Hinduism has a concept of an all pervading divinity; Buddhism is very rational in its effort to understand human suffering and liberation from it. Islam and Christianity are universalistic in their concept of creation and of the impact of God on the whole world.

A difficulty arises in so far as it is not the philosophical or theological views of a religion that have an impact on a

people in their day-to-day life. The average person is more concerned with the fears and stresses of life and has recourse to religion often as a safety valve. How can philosophical religion that can accept the value of secularization have an influence on popular religion? Some intellectual leaders tend to by-pass this problem, saying that the deeper religion is only for a few. Some others tend to compromise their fundamental philosophy on the basis that people should be given what they want including *mantras*, and less praiseworthy practices of religion.

Can the more enlightened among the religious leaders convey their perspectives to the masses? This is important both for inter-religious understanding and the enrichment of the religions themselves. If they fail to do so the advance of technology, communications and social change may enlighten the masses, who at that stage may doubt all religion because of its popular excesses.

Can secularity be an enrichment of religion?

Ceylon is today open to the influence of secularization. Even though popular religion manifests itself very much in terms of a safeguard against the stresses and troubles of life, there is an increasing control of man over nature. The deeper meaning of religion can become clear with a greater awareness of the core of the message of the founders of religions and of the religious traditions of mankind.

A worthwhile renewal of religions can be helped on by both the dialogue with the secular and the dialogue among the religious themselves. The challenge from rationalism itself can help us to find the true meaning of religion which need not clash with the rational, though religion or human reality is not exhausted by the rational only.

Malabe
Sri Lanka

Tissa Balasuriya

Japanese Religiosity, Old and New

Japan presents many a puzzle to students of her culture, and few things are more puzzling about her people than their religion. There is the vague, ill-defined notion of faith. Part and parcel of this is the syncretic quality of their religions: Shinto, Buddhism, the quasi-religion of Confucius, and then the hybrid "new religions". Each has influenced and modified the others. We find in Japanese history the greatest openness to religions coming from abroad, along with the most fierce religious persecution at least in one era. And in vastly modernized Japan religious practice is most unsophisticated, even primitive at times, showing little evidence of updating. One has the impression that people of early Japan would feel quite at ease in a Shinto shrine or even a Buddhist temple of 1972.

As everyone knows, the Japanese derived their national origin from the gods, until quite recent times. The *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*, the two most ancient documents, are at great pains to establish divine lineage, particularly for the ruling Tenno family, the oldest imperial line still reigning. Mythological as those two early books are they tell us a good deal about the religious sentiments of the folk of olden days. They were addicted to magico-religious beliefs and practices that were seemingly dictated and directed by shamen of both sexes. But "underlying the peculiar ethos of the early Japanese was their religious outlook, not so much in a systematic philosophical sense as with respect to what Anesaki once called the 'sympathetic response of the heart.'¹

The core of Japanese religiosity, old and new, is closely bound up with the emotions or feelings, and with mood. *Kimochi* is vital to religion among the Japanese. The Belgian missionary and ecumenist, Josef Spaë, writes:

1. Joseph Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*. (New York, 1966.) pp. 11&16.

Whatever be the actual words in which it expresses itself, this feeling consists in an irreducible state of consciousness which integrates a multiplicity of reactions, emotions, and all the tones of man's responses clustering around the Japanese core-word *kimochi* or mood it stands to reason that, in traditional Japanese religiosity, this feeling and affection will involve little analysis, comparison, or any of the normal discursive processes of thinking. In other words, this feeling tends to remain merely 'a subjective experience', unless it succeeds in establishing contact with an objective revelation, such as that of Christianity.²

Equally vital to an understanding of religion in Japan is awareness of its intimate relationship with the world of nature. Cosmic religion and revelation perhaps never existed in so pure a form as they did and still do in Japan, in spite of different religious influences from the outside. For one who has had any deep and continuous contact with the common folk there it is easy to appreciate this dimension of faith in the people. Though the inner reality is elusive and difficult to define, the fact of its presence is clear, and can be identified by scholars with the ancient faith of the Japanese.

Professor Kitagawa of Chicago University treats this perceptively. He notes:

In such a world view people did not consider themselves in any way separated from cosmic existence and the rhythm of nature. They felt a kinship with the world of nature.³

The Japanese of the 20th century may not generally be said to worship mountains, trees and rocks. But their reverence for, and veneration of, such objects of nature, and their feeling of

2. Josef J. Spae, *Japanese Religiosity*, (Tokyo, 1971), p. 36.

3. *Op. cit.*, P. 12.

kinship with them is not perhaps essentially different from that of their ancestors long ago.⁴

The sense of *kami* (gods) was central to this simple cosmic religion, which took it for granted that all creatures are integrally part of the cosmos, sharing the *kami* nature. As one of their philosophers has written, this native faith is rooted in "the tendency to think without setting up any opposition between the subject that knows and the object known."⁵ He states again:

The Japanese contemplates things in their naked reality and puts himself far from any category or idea of place, time, form, quality, relation, cause, etc. His knowledge of things is not obtained by considering them outside himself..... but rather, in a basic identity with his self with all things, he apprehends and feels the object as identified with himself inside him."⁶

This analysis becomes especially interesting in treating modern Japanese, even many so-called "non-believers."

The extraordinary contemplative attitude of the Japanese with regard to nature can be explained in this connection. In his contemplation of a mountain he is not seeking the mountain for its own sake. Rather, what he seeks and succeeds in experiencing there is the divine element, the numinous, what Nishitani Keiji calls the *Kami tarashimeru nanika* (god-shining something). It is not only the beauty of the sea or the starry sky that satisfies and entralls him, but the divine, that *nanika* (something), which he discovers there and which transcends all creation..... It is not a question of things

4. Spaë, *op. cit.*, pp. 160, 173-74, 181.

5. Cf. Fernando Basabe, *Religious Attitudes of Japanese Men*, Tokyo, 1968), p. 112, Karaki Junzo, in *Kamei Katsuiichiro and Usui Yoshimi*, eds., *Nihon no bi*. p. 93.

6. *Ibid.*

themselves being divine, but rather that in all things there is something which points to the divine, something which is different from all that man can express and think.⁷

Authors point out a natural consequence of this kind of faith in the *kami*: there was for a long time no need of special structures for worship, since all the world was a *kami*-habitation. And to-day too the shrines and temples often are small buildings before which the worshippers stand to pray. They seem to blend easily with their natural surroundings at any rate when not in the middle of a big city.⁸

The feeling of a close community of living beings gave rise to an optimistic attitude that Shinto has ever since claimed as its own. "For Shinto, 'Every day is a good day'....it is strongly confident of man's innate goodness.... and has a tremendous capacity for enjoying the good life."⁹ Surely Buddhism has not been known to generate this attitude.¹⁰ Closely aligned with a positive and bright outlook on life was a deep sense of gratitude, which has remained strong in the Japanese people down to modern times. I am inclined to think that the religious dimension in this feeling of gratitude has been greatly overlooked by scholars as well as by missionaries, and the particular way it is manifest in Japan is worthy of note.

Almost as characteristic of Japan as the *kami* faith is the emphasis upon purification or cleanliness. Authors like Sir George Sansom and A. Reischauer have called attention to the close relationship between religious lustration in Shinto and the natural fondness for frequent bathing.¹¹ As a religious rite this

7. *Op. cit.*, p. 118.

8. Kitagawa, *op. cit.* p. 15; Spae, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

9. Spae, *op. cit.*, pp. 113 & 95.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

11. George Sansom, *A Short Cultural History of Japan*, (N. Y., 1943), p. 43.

George Sansom, *A History of Japan to 1334*, (Stanford, 1966). p. 23).

was observed by Chinese visitors in Japan as early as the third century. It is curious to read that it apparently was a family bath—a custom which even to-day has not entirely died out as a preferred manner of cleansing, enjoyable and may be even with religious significance.

We are led naturally to the subject of sin and the sense of sin in the Japanese. Kitagawa gives a brief historical synopsis of it as he finds it in the early records. He claims that it was the “physical and mental defilements”, as contrasted with moral sins, that concerned the early Japanese.¹² It is the standard treatment of sin and evil in ancient Japan to minimize to the extreme any awareness of it.¹³ Again, some mention sin and evil as viewed by the early Japanese as a lack of harmony and beauty. If one included social relations in this harmony, I agree, I believe that the social morality found in the country to-day has a strong basis in the oldest writings. The *Kojiki*, for instance, mirrors a sense of sin that was intimately connected with causing harm to others, such as damaging the rice-field boundaries, irrigation ditches, etc. In a book published recently *Personality in Japanese History*, John C. Pelzel has a short but very insightful analysis of this notion of sin in the *Kojiki*. It is a social conception, and seems as meaningful as it is original.¹⁴ As will be pointed out further on, this has close connections with the “shame culture” that scholars observe in modern Japan.

There is revealed an even more basic sense of sin. It is viewed as a violation of a divine mandate, an awareness, though vague, that such disobedience is evil. This would not mean of course some abstract concept of evil or of sin as disobedience. All the same the sense of sin in the present-day Japanese, though evolved under Buddhist and Christian influence, can be discerned in kernel in the pollution taboos of the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* as well as in the purificatory laws and prayers of the *Norito*, the old book of ceremonies. There is a vague sense of their being the “will of the gods”, and that not to follow them is bad.

12. Kitagawa, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

13. Cf. George Sansom, *A Short Cultural History of Japan*. (London, 1936, p. 52.)

14. Albert Craig, Editor. (Princeton, 1970)

Fr Spae Remarks:

The concept of sin implying guilt and consequently responsibility to a higher order, if not a higher being, is found in literature and in daily parlance under many guises.¹⁵

The introduction of Buddhism into Japan from China in the sixth century, and its rapid growth and development through the sixth century, and its rapid growth and development through the years, quite naturally brought a change in the people's mentality concerning sin.¹⁶ Assuredly Buddhism's heavy emphasis on evil desires and the need for salvation burdened the Japanese conscience with a deeper sense of *zenaku* (good and evil). Confucian ideas of right and wrong too left their imprint. The Shinto feeling of community of living beings, when exposed to the Buddhist teaching on sin could have given rise to the social morality and "shame culture" of Japan: "the others in our heart, who are our conscience; our conscience is the others inside us".¹⁷

Spae concludes:

I have a feeling that the nobler and true aspect of the Japanese sense of sin is rapidly gaining ground, while the Confucianist notion of good and evil which is based on one's attitudes towards one's elders and superiors.... is declining.¹⁸

Undoubtedly the climate of democracy and emphasis on the individual since the end of World War II has had a big part to play in this.¹⁹

15. P. 147, note 52 of Basabe, *Japanese Youth Confronts Religion*.

16. Spae, pp. 121 & 258; Cf. also Kitagawa, *op. cit.*, pp. 46, 57, 68, 72, 82.

17. P. 146, note 52 & p. 105 of Basabe, *Japanese Youth Book*.

18. Cf, *Missionary Bulletin*. 1965, XIX, p. 464, quoted in Basabe, *Japanese Youth Confronts Religion* (Tokyo, 1967, p. 147, note 52).

19. Kitagawa, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

Kitagawa observes that just as the Western powers opened Japan a century ago, so the Allied Occupation in 1945 marked "the second opening" of Japan and this time it was to a wide internal, spiritual area. The immanent theocracy of "State Shinto", the emperor cult, was destroyed and Shinto with its 100,100 shrines began once again to take on a religious status. The gradual and surprising rise in attendance at big shrine festivals throughout the land since 1945 suggests that despite Shinto's difficulty in formulating doctrine or propagating faith, the ancient religious feelings are reasserting themselves.²⁰

Fernando Basabe, Jesuit professor of sociology at Sophia University in Tokyo, has compiled two informative books on modern religious trends in Japan: *Japanese Youth Confronts Religion* and *Religious Attitudes of Japanese Men*. The last chapter of the second book especially on the religious sentiment of the Japanese people is superb. It really is a reflection in depth on the meaning of all the surveys he directed, and which are reported in his two books. It exemplifies the use of statistics at its best, going beneath and beyond piecemeal and surface data to a consideration of the whole picture in the context of Japanese religious traditions.

We have found that 82% of our subjects deny having any religious belief and that an even greater percentage deny or doubt the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of life after death. Moreover we have come to doubt the genuine religious sincerity of those who do confess a belief in some religion. Are we not dealing, in many cases, with a religious faith based solely on the customs and traditions of Japan, and which lacks all personal conviction? Is it not an intramundane faith aimed at the acquisition of material advantages in this present life?²¹

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 279 & 285.

21. Basabe, *Religious Attitudes of Japanese Men*, p. 109.

Basae blames his own and the official national surveys for being drawn up on the basis of Western categories.²² His final conclusions are evidently made with a deep empathy for, and understanding of, Japanese culture. One of the finest instances of this is his treatment of the Japanese sense of contingency. He finds the religious dimension in this feeling of the evanescence of things and analyzes it, following Nishitani Keiji.²³

The "new religions" in Japan seem to have sprung up in great part as a response to the sense of vacuity and religious insecurity at the end of the Second World War.²⁴ Kitagawa notes this and adds further the factor of religious continuity in this:

These "new religions" have old roots.... Most of them, despite great variations in doctrinal formulations and cultic practices, share one common feature, namely, a preoccupation with salvation in this world. While their doctrines are far less sophisticated than those of the old established religions, they claim to offer a coherent meaning for life within the framework of their religious communities. As such, they demand full participation on the part of their adherents in a communal organization.²⁵

The present writer himself has observed that the charismatic founders and leaders of these new religions usually do not have the learned background of those medieval leaders, like Honen, Shinran and Nichiren, who greatly simplified their scholarly Buddhism to lead the common people in an Amidist faith.

Christianity is not a new religion in Japan, but it is not a traditional one either, though greatly respected. Basabe suggests some reasons why it has not caught on with the nation as a whole.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 115-16.

24. Spae, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

25. Kitagawa, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

It will be very difficult for the Japanese to accept any religion.... that presents him with a 'prefabricated God' and one that is foreign to him and to his personal experience. In this sense, the traditional way of presenting the God of Christianity as the rational conclusion of a few logical arguments, with no existential relationship to man, lacks meaning for the oriental psychology.²⁶

He then goes on to quote the Kitagawa book:

One of the greatest problems for contemporary Christianity seems to be its lack of capacity to take seriously the analysis of human existence and religious insight gained by the historic cultures of Japan, as well as a lack of willingness to enter the spiritual struggle of the present-day Japanese people.²⁷

We can conclude this brief study of a tremendously complicated topic with a few lines from Spaë. Quoting Wm. Brede Kristensen, he notes that "every religion ought to be understood on the basis of its own fundamental and absolute presuppositions, or it is not understood".²⁸

History, I hope to prove, suggests that there is a 'Japanese way' of man's approach to the ultimate realities. This 'way', in so far as it is 'Japanese', is not common to mankind; it is proper to Japan. Might it not be seen as God's specific revelation of himself, reflected in the cultural and psychological characteristics which identify the Japanese religiosity?²⁹

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- 26. Basabe, *Religious Attitudes of Japanese Men*, p. 119.
- 27. *Ibid.*, loc. cit., note 109; cf. Kitagawa, *op. cit.*, p. 338.
- 28. *Op. cit.*, p. 19.
- 29. *Ibid.* p. 7.

BULLETIN

The Christian Response to the Call of Human Suffering from Bangladesh

When the West Pakistani Military oppression began its notorious genocide in East Pakistan (as it was called then) on March 25, 1971, a tidal wave of human misery started overflowing from across the border into Indian territory. This is said to be the first of its kind in the political history of mankind, a flood of refugees, numbering approximately ten million, all victims of political and military oppression by a government of their own. The world has already judged its causes and effects and also evaluated its merits and demerits. So we need not spend time here on repeating well-known facts. The enormous number of the refugees and their utter destitution in an unfavourable season created great concern and anxiety among men who were sensitive to human suffering. No wonder the Church was the first to feel with them, for she is existentially conscious of her primary mission, the mission of alleviating human suffering and liberating man from every kind of bondage or oppression. She piloted herself very promptly to the scene before anybody else through her service agencies both national and international. Here an attempt is made to outline her actual response to the call of human suffering from Bangladesh on the basis of facts collected from an interview with Rev. Fr Yvon Caron one of the able leaders who worked in the refugee camps. Fr Yvon was the leader of a group of volunteers from Banaras to the camp of Patiram in Western Dinajpur district in West Bengal.

The local churches responded first

To the question how the Church was initially responding to the crisis of evacuees, Fr Yvon replied that it was the seven

local churches of the neighbouring Indian states that came forward with immediate alertness. In this context he said he could not remember any official declaration or appeal made by Vatican in favour of the evacuees or against the military genocide in Bangladesh. This initial silence of the Vatican was conspicuously observed by all peace-loving international bodies. Perhaps the veil of so-called non-interference "in the internal matters of a country" forbade the Vatican from speaking against the military oppression of an innocent, peace- and freedom-loving mass of people!

However the seven local Churches, namely, those of Calcutta, Krishnagar, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri (all in West Bengal) and Dumka (partly in W. Bengal & Bihar), and Shillong (in Meghalaya and Assam) and Silchar (in Assam and Tripura) felt the refugee problem very acutely. Individual initiative on the part of different Christian communities of the other dioceses sent them rushers to the spot with certain programmes of action. But having understood their shortage of resources and personnel they appealed to mighty organizations like Caritas-India. Simultaneously weeklies like *The New Leader* from Madras and *The Herald* from Calcutta worded the cry of the refugees very strongly.

Awakened by such appeals and well-informed through the reports of the fact-finding agencies of political parties and the like, individual bishops in India and also priests, religious superiors, rectors of the seminaries and others started moving their own people to the scene. Fr Yvon observed incidentally that there was no official appeal of the C.B.C.I. as such, though most of the local Ordinaries gave sufficient heed to the problem. Well, this must be symptomatic of the new awareness of responsibility of the local Churches to be conscious of their own respective identity and their own duty of spontaneously expressing their mission.

Massive Christian Action

It is a matter of great satisfaction, said Father Yvon, that *Caritas-India* promptly rushed to the field and took up the reins to co-ordinate all the relief activities of the Christian

agencies on a fantastically massive scale. It started functioning officially from April 1971, almost at the same time as the refugees flowed into India. Tremendous problems of shelter, sanitation, medical relief and food supply etc. accumulated to such an extent that *Caritas-India* shifted its head-quarters temporarily from Delhi to Calcutta in order to be very prompt in on-the-spot action. It co-ordinated all actions together with the Government of West Bengal in full harmony with the general policy of the Central Government of India. All the authorities offered such wonderful co-operation that the whole Christian activity in this crisis reflected the new spirit of active co-operation with all men of good will for the cause of human welfare. One could feel the splendid dialogical spirit of mutual contribution and all-out concentration on alleviating the human suffering. All heads and bodies put themselves together, secular and religious, governmental and private, bureaucrats and social workers. The effect too was very tangible. Sufficient help reached where it should; innumerable streams of tears were dried and millions of eyes were opened to the day of hope and freedom.

Caritas was operating over 95 camps while its mobile units covered a still wider area. According to its reports in order to solve the most urgent problem of shelter, roofing materials and huts were provided for more than two million refugees. Then the problem of medical relief: Over 2.6 million rupees' worth of medicines was distributed and the entire feeding programme of bulghur, milk balahar and flour catered to more than 500,000 people in the 4 states of West Bengal, Meghalaya, Assam and Tripura bordering Bangla Desh. In addition to all this *Caritas* was sending aid to the transit camps in Allahabad, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar and also to the areas in Orissa hit by the cyclone.

One could observe clearly how tension was mounting in several places between the refugees and the local population, not only because of the large-scale inflow from outside but also because relief organizations extended their services at first only to the refugees, when the condition of some of the local people owing to floods and other reasons was equally bad. In many places relief service centres were also opened to the distressed people of the locality. Fr Yvon's centre was an example in this

respect. Owing to his sympathy with the local people he was able to get their maximum support. He said that this kind of help was even extended to scattered Mukti Bahini men who some time took shelter in the refugee camps when driven back by Pakistani military reinforcements.

Organization and co-ordination of agencies

Caritas-India was not working with its own men or material. The splendid work it did was the co-ordination and effective managing of the different Christian Charities that offered service to the refugees. The following agencies require special mention in this context: *Caritas Internationalis*, *Apostolic Nunciature*, *Caritas Germany*, *Caritas Switzerland*, *CAFOD*, *USAID*, *Caritas Belgium*, *Caritas Italia*, the *Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace*, *Caritas Austria*, *Caritas Speyer*, *Caritas Neerlandica*, *Secours Catholique*, *Ausirian Catholic Relief*, *Conferenza Episcopale - Italiana*, *CRS - New York*, *St. Columban's Mission Society*, *Austcare*, *Corso*, *Damien Foundation*, *Caritas Ireland*, *MHD Germany*, *CASA Denmark*, *Terres des Hommes*, *Carmas Switzerland and Help the Aged London*. We acknowledge here our inability to put in this small bulletin, a long list of numerous charitable organizations abroad as well as in India, all of which poured out very generously aid in kind and cash, techniques and personnel, placing them at the disposal of the managing machinery of *Caritas-India* which channelled everything to the respective fields of action.

According to the reports of Caritas, it had over 1,400 salaried members on its staff both in administration and in the field. The Caritas office in Calcutta had ten departments, namely, Management, Personnel and Liaison, Purchase, Clearance and Transport, Accounts, Operation Life - Line Alpha Programme, Transport, Medical, Publicity and Information, and General Staff.

As a credit to this organized co-ordination of all agencies, who kept their own respective identities in the fields of action and were allowed to execute their specialized techniques and programmes in a consolidated scheme of service, the work of *Caritas*, Christian in its whole integrity, received wider publicity in the press, Catholic and secular, and on the radio. On four

occasions, it is reported, aspects of Caritas work were pictured prominently in the secular papers like *The Statesman*, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *Jugantar* and *The Indian Express*. The news item from the Bengali stations of AIR devoted a full-minute coverage of Caritas Relief work. This publicity certainly gave a boost to the volunteers in the field and created public interest in the activities of Christian Charities.

Volunteers

As has already been noted there were very generous offers of volunteers from a number of Indian Christian institutions. Seminarians, reverend sisters, university students, laymen and laywomen, all came forward to offer the best of their service to the cause of the refugees. To back them there were also trained volunteers from abroad, like *The Knights of Malta* (Germany) and CONCERN (Ireland). It should be noted here that SERVICE CIVIL INTERNATIONAL had a batch of 8 Indian-trained volunteers in its list.

Caritas – India had sent out a request to every Indian bishop for the appointment of a competent person who could spare some time to co-ordinate relief efforts in the dioceses and to whom Caritas could communicate its requirements especially in the matter of recruiting volunteers and staff personnel. As the reports of *Caritas* acknowledge, it will always remain indebted to the volunteers who staffed the operation in the field from April 1971 and especially to those who chose to stay in the camps during the fourteen-day war. It is on record that 1,112 volunteers served in Caritas camps; and this figure does not include those who were recruited directly by the seven dioceses of the border states, in which the refugee operations were conducted. The personal department of *Caritas* handled the delicate task of recruiting and receiving these volunteers and appointing them to the needy areas, with supreme efficiency and remarkable patience.

Programmes of relief work

a) Feeding programmes

According to Fr Yvon it is difficult to describe how wonderfully the basic needs of human daily sustenance were met

satisfactorily and effectively by means of a number of programmes of food supply. *Caritas* planned the schemes with the collaboration of a number of skilled men invited from institutions like OXFAM and CRS. A feeding scheme called "Operation Life-Line Alpha" of *Caritas*' own machinery was feeding over 300,000 people daily. Another scheme called 'Nutritional Therapy Centres', which attended to children affected by malnutrition were feeding children twice a day with highly nutritive food ingredients. In this scheme the names of Dr. Margaret Meyer, Sister Elsie and Dr. Bagchi will be specially remembered for their specialization in the production of nutritive food. 'The Bread Feeding Scheme' of CRS was working in co-ordination with *Caritas* and distributing over 50,000 loaves of bread every day. This scheme was opened to the local people in distress, suffering, as it were, on account of the massive flood of refugees and of the rise in prices of local goods and also as a result of disastrous conditions created by the heavy flood and cyclone.

b) Sanitation

The sanitation department of *Caritas* was so efficiently functioning that it saved many lives from epidemics of different kinds. Over 4 million rupees was spent on sanitation and water supply alone. One may be surprised to read in a report that in early December, 1971, along with 40 tons of Bleaching Powder and Bagaon dust, 1,000 litres of Phenyle and other disinfectants were despatched to various camps. In key positions of the big camps like the one at Salt-Lake water-tanks were constructed; two power-generators also were installed. About eight miles of pipe-line was laid by MHD Knights of Malta, Germany, providing water to the entire camp. Two water purification plants were also in operation. The sanitary system of 1,200 units in Salt-Lake costing Rs. 12 lakhs met all requirements. Flushed from a central system and regularly serviced it appeared as a symbol of efficient planning and execution. Further, drawn up by a sanitation expert attached to OXFAM, Calcutta, a project covering all camps in the 24 Parganas was operated with a mobile team staffed with sanitation inspectors and educators.

c) Clothes supply

Man lives not only by food but also by protecting his body from inclement weather and disease. The winter was cornering the refugees in the months of November and December. There was an enormous supply of woollen blankets and other knitted articles, pull-overs, coats etc., collected from inland and from abroad through the efficient co-ordinating agencies of *Caritas*. It made every effort to get children's clothes in India and from abroad. Sewing centres were started in Calcutta, the local ready-made garments market was swept clean and tailors among the refugees were employed. Gifts of clothes had come in from Goa, Bombay and Madras and from innumerable charitable centres in India. As a result, *Caritas* was able to distribute over 400,000 articles of children's clothing in three sizes to the refugee children, as early as October, 1971. The later supply is not yet fully recorded.

d) Medical relief service

Caritas Medical Relief work was by far the most ameliorating of all programmes. Its service covered a net-work of camps accommodating over 2 million refugees. Thirteen clinics and fifteen hospitals were operating the largest of which was the one at Salt-Lake with 270 beds. Out-patient departments operated in over 60 camps and mobile units covered several more. There were 25 doctors and 67 qualified nurses, all salaried personnel in *Caritas* medical units. The International Rescue Committee provided 2 doctors, 2 pharmacists and one laboratory assistant whose stipends it paid. Religious congregations of sisters working in the affected areas were the main force behind the *Caritas Medical Relief Service*. Volunteer doctors from St John's Medical College, Bangalore, and six doctors from Manipal Medical College also served in the camps for a period on a shift system.

e) Work centres

A work centre with 18 sewing machines, 2 handlooms and a knitting section was operating in the *Caritas* camp at Salt-Lake. According to reports some 12 sewing machines were supplied to Thakurpur in the 24 Parganas District and 6 machines to a work centre attached to Fatima Shrine in Calcutta. In Krishnagar and

Raiganj, *Caritas* sewing centres turned out thousands of children's clothes made of the material in which CRS supplies were packed.

1 Education of the Children

Caritas sponsored the installation of 8 primary schools in Raiganj with 15,000 children on their rolls and 149 teachers. One in Barang with 3,000 had a staff of 60 teachers. All of them were recruited from the camp itself. There were two in Salt-Lake with 1,500 children and two in Meghalaya with 3,500 children. Sewing, embroidery and painting were also taught in these schools. A playing field was provided by the Camp Commandment in Salt-Lake. The headmasters and most of the teachers in the schools were evacuees. This solved to some extent, their un-employment while for the children school time served as a pastime too.

Glimpses of a life in a camp

It may be interesting here to narrow down our survey to a single camp and see how it started and worked. Fr Yvon gave a small sketch of the work of his own team from Banaras. "I am extremely pained and disappointed that none of you has volunteered for Bangla Desh." This was the moving appeal made by Bishop Patrick D'Souza in a circular sent to his own people during the time of the refugee influx into the dioceses in the neighbourhood of Bangla Desh. Situated far from the scene of the crisis the people of Banaras diocese in the initial stages of the refugee problem did not sufficiently realize the seriousness of the problem. The appeal made an impact on the Bishop's people. Hence the context of the following review of Fr Yvon, who volunteered to pilot a team to the camp:

"On July 12, 1971, taking leave from our deeply concerned Bishop Patrick D'Souza, Fr. Yvon Caron (leader) and Fr. Alex D'Souza with one brother of the Indian Missionary Society and three sisters of the 'Queen of the Apostles' went over Via Calcutta to Raiganj, for a camp at Patiram in West Dinajpur District, some six miles from the fateful frontier. Before many days, the team met a few living "Good Samaritans", the Ghosh family. Actually that most considerate and helpful family solved the accomodation problem: 2 spacious living rooms with kitchen,

bathroom and store-rooms, graciously provided at a ten-minutes walk from the theatre of work.

"A refugees' camp it was, indeed, 14,000 inmates and 25,000 more squatters about the village and its surroundings. The top urgency went to a make-shift hospital for treating at once the cholera cases. Except the assistance of a refugee doctor, thankfully accepted, the medical care in the whole camp rested entirely on our team, both for the indoor patients as well as for the daily stream of 200/300 other suffering persons. Another delicate business: the government's programme to provide a supplementary ration of grains; the discreet tact of the group and its close collaboration with the official hands assured an equitable distribution to all in need. After 2 months one more service was added; a special UNICEF item for the under-nourished children. Some 4,000 of them benefited by a daily meal. Here, a word of thanks: the medicines, grains, oil, clothes etc., dispensed by our people originated from different Agencies through the *Caritas-India*".

The team joyfully recall the days when their own pastor, Bishop Patrick himself rolled up his sleeves and shared the labours of his volunteers for four days in the camp.

Conclusion and Evaluation:

In this bulletin we are not at all preoccupied with giving a comprehensive statistics of the activities of *Caritas-India*. This is far away from the scope of this survey. However, our superficial gleanings of some of the data of the activities of *Caritas* and other allied agencies are helpful, we believe, to show in outline the Christian response to the massive problem of refugees from Bangla Desh. What the Church charismatically is all about is preferably the emphasis of our survey, even though her charismatic mission in the alleviation of human suffering necessarily required massive and fantastic organisation. We get hints of how organisational structures can go very well in harmony with the genuine charism of individual initiatives, notwithstanding the merit of the centralisation of power if at all there was something of that in this particular issue.

The method and motivation of the Church's encounter with the suffering people of Bangla Desh has been clearly pointed out to be a purely Christian one, not merely philanthropic, not merely humanitarian, but over and above an occasion of sincere Christian witnessing to the gospel message of charity. The method of executing this charity was one of real dialogue in action, and co-operation with all men of good will, for the welfare of mankind; and this was the share of Christian involvement in the fight for freedom too, if one sees that something of this is allied to relief activities in the camps of refugees.

A new motivation for the training of seminary personal so that they may be ready to face similar future calamities has also been imbibed by those who volunteered from seminaries. They recalled, as Fr. Yvon observed the Apostolic letter of Pope Paul VI in 1971:

“Today more than ever, the word of God will be unable to be proclaimed or heard unless it is accomplished by the witness of the *power of the Holy Spirit, working within the action of Christians in the service of their brothers*, at the point at which their existence and their future are at stake.”

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Book Review

AFTER VATICAN II: Renewal and Crisis

by P. De Letter, S. J.,

(Ranchi, Catholic Press, 1972, pp. xii - 151, Rs. 5/-)

This book is a systematic study and critical evaluation of the various developments in the Church after the Vatican II. The author analyses the different factors which seem to have contributed much to the present situation in the Church.

The first part of the book gives the background of the crisis. It begins with a general picture of the present crisis and proceeds to the analysis of its relation with the Episcopate, presbyterate, Religious and laity. The first part ends with a study of the crisis in the missions. The new understanding of the role of the Church seems to have caused a certain amount of confusion in the missions. In the second part, the author analyses the nature of the crisis in Faith, prayer, liturgy, theology, obedience and authority, collegiality and the magisterium in the Church. These are indeed the areas which pose problems in the Church today.

Studies of this kind are very useful and most welcome as far as they help us understand the present situation of the Church and prepare us to face the challenges they offer. The author deserves our gratitude for this work. It seems that the author takes into consideration only those problems which have their origin in the West! A study of this kind would have been much more useful if the specific problems of the Eastern Churches were also tackled. The Eastern Ecclesiology is indeed rich and it is capable of throwing much light upon the problems today. A particular kind of ecclesiology developed in the West with a monolithic structure is largely responsible for the crisis in the Church. The absence of a proper pneumatological emphasis, and the exaggerated preoccupation in the organizational aspects are

the two major defects in the ecclesiology developed in the West. The East never believed in monolithic structures and always maintained the right of the local Churches (particular churches) to preserve and foster their own liturgical, spiritual, disciplinary and theological heritage. The Church was always conceived by them as a communion of local Churches. The thirst for uniformity in the Church has caused havoc even in the Indian Church during the period of Western colonization. The disastrous divisions in the Indian Church trace their origin to this period of conquest and colonization.

While discussing the crisis among the Religious, statements like "the Church cannot live and be holy without religious, Existentially considered, the Catholic Church is unthinkable without religious" (p. 37) etc., seem to savour exaggeration!

This book is quite timely and may be made use of for seminars and study classes.

Xavier Koodapuzha

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